

Assessment of Local Organizations Characteristics Based on Social Capital in Cities: A Case Study in Tehran Local Councils

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Abstract

Social capital can be named as a set of potential resources aroused from social networks in internalized communications and is able to lead trust, awareness, participation and mutual benefits to increasing quality of life in cities. City neighborhoods as smallest units of spatial organization have significant role in creating social interactions, forming behaviors of people and social networks and last but not least, in developing social capital. Local councils as new social organizations were established with the emphasis on joining city management to citizens and paving the way for local participation. They also empower civil societies and activate social capital. This survey with attention to local councils as the context of social participation, analyzes traits, authorities and duties mentioned in law. Then, we studied members of local councils in gender, age, literacy and job by SPSS and K² test and descriptive-analytic method. Results show that activating social capital is in charge of local organizations. Searching in laws demonstrates that city management system is not eager to associate local councils in decision making and implementations. There are legal vacuums as well. To strengthen these councils, strategies will be suggested at last.

Keywords: social capital, local organization, local council, Tehran

Introduction

Social capital as a public action and covering social common norms and values, attention and awareness and trust, extends in the form of social networks and formal and informal participation. Neighborhood is the smallest divided part of the city in which life is flowing and is a special place and a bed for social actions and local organizations. People with different

social, cultural and economic characteristics live in communities and by this common place, correlation and mutual behavior happen. It can be concluded that communities possess social capital potentially which is able to strengthen social networks and civil organizations. Local councils, besides taking benefit from voluntary participation of citizens, pave the way for elites to be active and increase trust and awareness between citizens. Local councils of Tehran were established in 1385 to facilitate participation.

This survey intent to answer this question: Do local councils have enough capacity to create and increase social capital? To find the answer, thesis analyzes theories about local councils and social capital by descriptive-analytic method. It also assesses the performance of local councils by field study and using software.

Social capital

Social capital as it is used today refers to G.Hanivan's (1916) writing: "a tangible thing which effects human life the most...good will, friendship, social relationship and understanding"(Woolcock, 2005). Jane Jacobs (1960) in her book (life and death of American cities) notice social capital: "compact social networks in ancient areas of city and mixed land use are sorts of social capital. They help cleanliness and security and quality of life in public urban areas (Naderi, 2008). Since 1990 this concept has been taken into consideration as an important subject in social sciences (Faqihi, 2001).

Pierre Bourdieu(1985) believes that social capital is the output of potential or de facto resources combination related to a lasting network of internalized communications between members of a group(Bourdieu,1985). He describes social capital as situations and relationships in groups and social networks that increase opportunities, information, resources and stations among people (MollaHosseini, 2002). Robert Putnam (1993) describes social capital as a set of horizontal communi-

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cations between individuals and trust, norms and networks which enhance mutual benefits and efficiency by making coordinated facilities (MollaHosseini, 2002). Civil participation is so important and the more compact networks are the more probable citizen's participation to gain mutual benefits will be. Powerful norms strengthen reciprocal exchange, facilitate connection, and enhance information flow about trustiness (Putnam, 2001). Beside civil participation, Putnam mentions reciprocal trades and trust as mental and cognitive elements of social capital (Nteqpour, 2006). So, he uses three indexes: awareness, participation and civil organization to evaluate social capital. James Kolman (1998) believes that social capital appears in communication between individuals. These communications should facilitate activities (Kolman, 1998). He names social capital as a social process which is created by social organizations. Social capital is productive like other kind of capitals and helps reach to a specific goal (Kolman, 1998). He nominates some social relations that can make capital resources: commitment, expectation, and potential capacity of information, norms and ideology. Portes (1998) says: "Social capital is so close to absorbing and preserving interests for citizens. It is linked to goodwill in social networks, trust and tendency (Portes, 1998). There are two kinds of social capital: bridging and bonding. Efe (2002) considers awareness and attention as dimensions of social capital and defines it as: thoughts, believes, sensitivity toward social and politic life which leads to concern and tendency. It is the opposite of abandonment and apathy (Oofe, 2002). Bolen and Inks nominate 8 components for social capital: participation, action-oriented station, trust and security, bridging, capacity of accepting differences, valuing life, bridging among coworkers and bonding among family members (Qafari, 2005). In recent years, social capital has been under consideration of international organizations because they believe it can provide social integration (World bank, 1999). Paxeton (1999) defines social capital generally as: objective and subjective connections. Objective connection is an objective network which connects people to each other in public spaces. Subjective connection referees to specific characteristics: trust, positive feelings and reciprocation.

Social capital has different levels: primary (individual), middle (in group), last (social). The third one is bridging in which trust is formed within social groups, while problem solving or agreements are more feasible. It leads to public trust, benefits and urban development. Two kinds of networks form social capital: formal participation (councils and local associations) and informal participation (religious activities, charity).

Social capital theories, considering local organizations

Michle Woolcock and Naroyan Deepa mention four viewpoints about Social capital and its role in neighborhoods:

A. Community-oriented: In this viewpoint, Social capital is equal to local organizations like local governance, associations and civil groups.

Here, the focus is on the number and compaction of groups. They believe that Social capital is naturally a public benefaction. The more it is, the better, and always has a positive effect on social welfare (Woolcock, 2005).

B. Network-oriented: This emphasizes on both negative and positive aspects of Social capital, and the importance of horizontal and vertical connections between individuals, bonding and bridging. This point of view believes that powerful horizontal connections without weak bridging (social gaps like religion, class, gender and socio-economic stations) may lead to party's jobbery (Woolcock, 2005). It avoids from organizations which form communities and are formed by them, also ignores connection between society and government (Woolcock, 2005).

C. Organization-oriented: Social networks viability is generally the result of political, legal and organizational sphere. Unlike two last viewpoints that see social capital as an independent variable, this one considers social capital as a dependant variable. It argues that group's capacity to act in the interest of society is dependent on formal organizations that control the groups (Woolcock, 2005).

D. Partnership-oriented:

a. Government or society is not naturally good or bad. The effect of government, association and local community on public interests is different.

b. Governments and local communities do not have enough resources for a sustainable and broad development, on their own. They need supplements within and beyond their boundaries.

c. The government has a prominent role in facilitating positive results of development. Because, not only it is the final supplier of public goods and the sanction of law, it also can facilitate sustainable unities beyond political and religious boundaries in the best way. Local communities have an important role in paving the way for good governance as well (Woolcock, 2005). Partnership-oriented point of view suggest three main duties to researchers, theorists and policy makers: recognizing the nature of social communities and the relations between formal organizations, defining internalized strategy, based on these relations (specially bonding and

bridging) and finding the answer of this question: how positive effects of social capital can remove sectarianism, isolationism and corruption? (Woolcock, 2005).

Formation of local organizations on the basis of social capital

Some theorists like Vanz believe that formal participation is so effective. Connecting to society with autonomous-bureaucratic structure has an important

role in projects success (Imani, 2007). Formal participation as a sustainable capital in a neighborhood, in which citizens attend an autonomous structure and ask for their needs, is undeniable. Therefore, local governance leads to direct voluntary participation and increases trust. Responsibility, commitment and compassion are improved between individuals. Most important effects of forming local and nongovernmental councils are presented in table 1:

Table 1: Effects of forming local and nongovernmental councils in a neighborhood

Micro effects	Macro effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Becoming a member of various groups - Extending personal communications - Defining the problem in public on the basis of convincing method - Telling opinions and solutions for social difficulties on the basis of convincing method - Attending group decision making on the basis of convincing method - Choosing and be chosen in public and increasing social tolerance in confronting different ideas on the basis of convincing method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extending multiple social networks and facilitating social interference - Social correlation - Active voluntary participation - Convincing - Power distribution and avoid centralization - Strengthening organizational hierarchies and increasing the number of groups - Active society and transferring information Discourse relations

Local organizations function assessment model

Attempts to assess local management function is at its early stages; however, we can mention Putnam's approach (social studies model), Paxeton's and organizational studies model. All these models concentrating on efficiency and effectiveness are decided to evaluate local organizations function. But some theorists like Firoozabadi and Imani (Imani, 2007) and Baqeri (1389) argue that these are not efficient for developing countries which are recently democratized in local issues. Some traits like members' information, legal transparency and sanction are effective on practicability. In last, a triplet model is proposed: evaluating efficiency (in data), evaluating efficiency (ecologic effects, service quality and citizens' attitude), and evaluating organization traits (sphere, members, and social structure).

Materials and Methods

This thesis is decided to analyze local councils in Tehran on the basis of third level of proposed model which evaluates organization traits by field study, library studies, statistic software and interviewing councilors. Studied characteristics are: members'

information (gender, age, literacy, and job), social structure (norms and values emphasized in organizations), legal transparency (white paper and documents) and sanction.

Case study: Local councils in Tehran

Tehran experienced a significant transition in city management by establishing city council. Holding election to select the members, candidacy to become a mayor and electing the mayor by majority votes are traits of this transition. There are 15 people in city council of Tehran which means one in every 600000 citizens have an agent in the council (to estimate Tehran population about 9 million people). This makes city management difficult. Therefore, it is essential to decentralize the city management and vest in neighborhoods. Tehran divides into 374 neighborhoods and each one holds an election to select 10 people as councilors. One in every 2406 citizens has an agent in local councils (Tehran local council's staff, 2010). Local councils as civil organizations are capable to join citizens to city management and help in decision making. The relations of local councils, city council and municipality can pave the way for participation and subtract the distance between citizens, decision mak-

ers and experts. Participation in decision making, policy making, and implementation, surveillance, increasing place connection and social capital and social security, conserving cultural heritage of each neighborhood, distribution of services and facilities and handling social harms are the most important goals of civil organizations.

Results

Background information

Gender, age, literacy and job are analyzed by statistic software. Results show that from 3740 local councilors in Tehran, 87.6% are male and 12.4% are female (Table2).

Table 2. Local councilors' gender in second and third periods

Third period		Second period		Variables
Frequency percentage	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Frequency	
12.4	463	11.6	432	Female
87.6	3277	88.4	3278	Male
100	3740	100	3710	Sum

Number of females has been increased in comparison with the last period of local councils. Edward Glaser (2000) demonstrates that «age» has an important role in social capital. Social capital increases by aging but from a certain age, it starts to diminish (Firouzabadi, 2006). Most members are between 25 to 40 years old and the number of young councilors has been increased from last period. More details are presented in table3.

Table 3. Local councilors' age in third period

Frequency percentage	Frequency	Aging groups
38	1424	25-40
34.4	1287	41-55
24.3	909	56-70
3.2	120	Above 71
100	3740	Sum

Social capital has the most powerful correlation with literacy (Glaser, 2001). Table 4 represents members' literacy from primary level to PhD.

Most councilors have high school degrees (31.3%). Some theorists like Glaser believe that people usually invest more on their social relations, in jobs involving social communications. Table 5 shows councilors' jobs in third period of local councils.

They are 88% married and 11% single. They were mostly born and grew up in cities (not villages). 45% were born in Tehran and 4% were born in metropolitans. 55% are migrants. They mostly have lived in the neighborhood for a long time (the average is 26 years). Most councilors run their own business (not institutional jobs).

Table 4. Local councilors' literacy in third period

Sum	Seminary proof	PhD	M.A degree	B.A degree	Association degree	Diploma	High school degree	Levels
3740	30	58	270	1000	284	1174	924	Frequency
100	0.8	1.5	7.2	26.7	7.5	31.3	25	Frequency percentage

Table 5. Local councilors' jobs in third period

Sum	Clergy	Teacher	Retired	Student	Private jobs	Employee	Worker	House wife	Levels
3470	20	243	718	28	1549	980	16	177	Frequency
100	0.5	6.4	19.1	0.7	41.4	26.4	0.4	5	Frequency percentage

Social structure

Scott believes that social structures are regular aspects of relationships, values and norms (Baqeri, 2010). People accept voluntary membership in organizations on the basis of these norms and values. If they emphasize on participation, relationship and trust, public actions and reciprocal exchanges will be expectable, otherwise serious problems will occur.

Legal transparency

Legal transparency and documents reviewed as well. Councils established based on act71 (law of organization, duty and election of Islamic councils in Iran) and law of election of mayors (approved in 1/3/1996). These documents present the reason of establishing civil councils: decentralization and real and sustainable participation of people. Local council is a nongovernmental, decentralized, nonpolitical, voluntary and participation-oriented, autonomous organization. Regarding to act12, elites are invited to help local councils (statute of local councils, 2006). Regarding to principle100 of constitution, to accelerate social, economic, cultural and institutional programs, public participation is needed.

Local councils are not mentioned directly in law, so city council determines duties of local councils to solve this problem: consulting, surveillance, coordination and participation with municipality, decision making, instruction, and accomplishment. It can be concluded that local councils do not have a certain legal place, neither attempts can be seen toward legitimization. Local councils should have independent roles in decentralization system and no influence or governmental organization should affect them. A compiled law is essential to supervise local councils function. Related to acts of statute, they are just unnecessary executive organizations and no independent legal place has been considered for them.

Sanction

Principles and laws are not capable enough to ascertain a real and effective participation. Despite apt and authorities to accomplish limited tasks, decision making and sanction are still under trouble. They are not permitted to make effective and realizable decisions. Effective participation in a neighborhood happens when citizens become a part of decision making system. Absence of strong local councils lead to disaffiliation and needs would not be met.

Conclusions

Social capital is a set of potential resources which is formed by internalized communications to reach trust, awareness, quality of life and mutual benefits. It is extended by formal and informal participation. Neighborhood is a physical and social place and a bed for public actions. It can be considered as a basic component in social capital enhancement. Social capital strengthens participation by forming social networks and civil associations. This approach leads to coordinated facilities, mutual interests and efficiency in society. Local organizations bring voluntary participation and pave the way for elites to present their ideas.

To assess local council's functions, internalized traits (members' information, social structure, legal transparency and sanction) were reviewed. Women attendance is highlighted in third period of local councils. Most councilors are young. Elites are pleased to participate in related actions. Local councils suffer from legal vacuum which decrease efficiency and effectiveness. Necessity of establishing local councils, their responsibility and operational area have not been seen explicitly in law. This transformed them to consultants and decorative organizations. If these organizations are not considered in urban management, they will cause frustration, decrease in public trust and participation. Following strategies will help active participation in neighborhoods:

- a. Legitimizing local councils as civil-collaborative organizations
- b. Defining responsibilities and operational area
- c. Making executive organizations to participate with local councils
- d. Developing sanction
- e. Budget supplement
- f. Accountability of other executive organizations to local councils
- g. Developing conditions of membership in local councils
- h. Informing people about local council functions.

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